

CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM
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June 1, 1954

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chief, Western Hemisphere

SUBJECT : Debriefing of Col. Edward N. L. Glass, 1 June 1954.

Col. Glass: Per instructions furnished me in early May, I proceeded to Guatemala City, stopping at Los Angeles and Mexico City, arriving at Guatemala City at noon 9 May which was a Sunday. About 10 o'clock Monday, I walked with Mrs. Glass to the National Palace and was standing on the steps when a group of officers hurried up and greeted me like old friends. They guided me to the object of my visit, the Minister of Communications and Public Works, Mr. Carlos Sandoval Andana. He was in conference with the President, Monday being his conference day, but he sent word out that he was delighted that I was in Guatemala and would call on me at the hotel that night if I would be so good as to wait for him. I did and he did, and we spent a very pleasant two hours. He told me that the President was pleased at my being in the country, that he had ordered a car and driver placed at my disposition, and that I was to consider myself a guest of the country. Mrs. Glass and I made the usual tourist rounds of the city and suburbs like good tourists. Wherever we went, Guatemalans whom I had forgotten about would come charging up and embracing me and it was a struggle to have any privacy for the next ten days owing to the flood of invitations. Not that we wanted privacy, but I had wished to make my own schedule. On May 21, 22 and 23, we went to the highlands, to Lake Atitlan, Chichicastenango, and Quiche. Monday, the 24, I gave a small cocktail party for about 60 native officers and civilians, to return the compliments I had received.

I cannot over estimate the cordiality and hospitality with which we were received. I refer to Cabinet ministers, top ranking Army officers, Central American diplomats, newspaper editors, at least two Catholic priests, and a great number of civilians and businessmen, active or retired.

I arranged to delay my scheduled return for three days and I am happy that I did in view of the events which transpired. However, due to extremely bad weather I was delayed three additional days when no planes arrived nor took off. I finally left Saturday, the 29th, and arrived in Washington Sunday night returning by way of New Orleans. I consider the information I gleaned to be of value but only so far as the credence lent it.

Col. C J Will you describe your initial contacts with the Embassy and the development of subsequent contacts?

Col. Glass: My instructions upon leaving Washington were to act as a tourist, to emphasize that by the presence of Mrs. Glass, and to have a minimum of contact with our Embassy people. Per regulations effecting all

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military people, active and retired, when abroad, I went to the Consulate to register. The young lady recognized my name from my identification card and informed me that Col. McCormick was expecting me and waiting for me, so I went to his office, chatted a few minutes about things in general, then he ushered me into the Ambassador's office. Ambassador Puerifoy was very cordial, and informed me that several people on his staff were waiting to meet me and would give me every assistance in my mission. This rather surprised me because it appeared that the signals had been changed in the middle of the game.

Within the next 4 or 5 days, Col. McCormick and [] singly, called on me at the lobby of the San Carlos Hotel. I was impressed by the mutual scorn of these two teammates. [] for instance, told me to keep away from McCormick, that he was very unreliable; McCormick said the same thing about [] except doubled in spades; and they were both unanimous in condemning the Naval Attache.

Col. [] May we have your comments regarding the recent delivery of arms to Guatemala?

Col. Glass: [] came charging down to my hotel fairly beating his brains out in alarm. I told him not to worry, that it was a perfectly legitimate purchase, that I had already been assured by my contacts, civil and military, in the National Palace, for instance, Secretary Andana; Col. Paez of the Military Academy; his assistant, Lt. Col. Chinchila; Major Rosales, Commandant of the Cadets; newspaper editors Blanco and Marroquin Rojas, and others whose evidence was confirmatory. The information boiled down to the fact that this was the normal replacement of missing and worn out military equipment, destined solely for the use of the Army. By no means will it be available to the Communists as rumored in headlines in the U.S. press, magazine articles and cables. Col. Parinello is pictured on a newspaper which I brought back with me making a dispassionate explanation of this notorious arms shipment, and in my opinion it is 100 per cent credible. I took occasion to go to his office the following day and told him what a nice thing he had done for all concerned. I dropped the remark that I hoped that he could re-equip his little army and the military academy, and asked if he could tell me what the shipment consisted of. He said, "My dear General, we don't know ourselves yet till we get it unpacked. This was purchased abroad by a civilian commission sent there for the purpose, and you know how susceptible a commission like this is, they will buy any bill of goods shoved at them", or words to that effect.

Col. [] Do you have any comments on the reaction within the Guatemalan Army to American pressure and disapproval of this shipment?

Col. Glass: The reaction was very evident. The Army has been and is pro-American, and their reaction over the turmoil stirred up was one of hurt surprise. They felt that their efforts to modernize and re-equip their little army were quite understandable between military people, that there could be no question that these arms would be used by subversives;

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that, in fact, speaking as one military man to another, it would be used to combat these very Communists. In brief, although this newspaper and State Department turmoil has not yet alienated their reliance on Uncle Sam, it has been on the point of cooling off their good will.

Col. [] Colonel Glass, will you give us your views regarding the stability of Arbenz' regime in Guatemala, and of the Communist elements which now form a part of that regime?

Col. Glass: They are on their last legs. From both military and civilian elements, I have learned that dissatisfaction in general. All over the city is seen the number #32 painted on walls. This refers to the 32nd article of the Constitution which prohibits the existence of any foreign dominated political party. Excessive taxes have raised the cost of living to place even essential elements of food out of reach of the masses. The Guatemalans are very patriotic people. They resent foreign interference from whatever source. The resentment against a small coterie who are now enjoying having the President's ear is general and marked. The demission of this character, FORTUNY, I believe, is the start of a house cleaning. I talked to Mrs. Arbenz' brother, Mr. Villanova, who had just returned from the U.S., furious over his sister's support of those coyotes, as he called them, up in the palace; that Jacobo had gone too far, that it can't continue, and for the good of Guatemala, something has to happen -- but quick. I believe the President finds himself in a situation similar to that of Mr. Roosevelt during the coal strike a few years back, involving the mine operators and Mr. John L. Lewis, when he said, "A plague on both your houses". The Army, of course, has no sympathy with this Red infiltration. As I predicted before going down there last month, any Red domination would result in the purge of the Army's best elements. It is true that "they have never had it so good", but their security is but momentary. Any action involving the over-throw of this Government would, in my opinion, require a coalition of military and civilian elements, perhaps of people not presently in the news. I can refer to this so-called movement by an exile in Honduras - one Castillo Armas. He is absolutely discredited with the Army as being the vulgar assassin. His abortive attempt to seize the airport in 1950 was not exactly kosher. It was not a straight-forward military coup but a commando raid with the purpose of assassinating military commanders, poor devils who were merely performing their duties. This cooked his goose as far as the military was concerned. His raid was tipped off to the Government and they were hunted down and killed like so many rabbits, the only one to escape being Castillo Armas himself.

I believe that June will see a big change. Engineered by or involving figures such as Diaz, Sanchez, and Enrique Peralta. Several contacts have even placed the date as two weeks from last Saturday (12 June 1954). The change will either consist in an outright overthrow of Arbenz or a complete about-face on the part of Arbenz toward his Red advisors.

The Government is almost bankrupt. It enjoys considerable income from the coffee properties which were expropriated from the Germans at the

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start of the last world war and never returned to the owners. With coffee at \$.89 a pound instead of the 1941 price of thirty-odd cents, this income is not inconsiderable. Public works, practically all useless, are continuing to drain the treasury. For instance, a highway paralleling the railroad to Puerto Barrios, the tremendous olympic stadium built to impress the rest of Latin America, the mile-long roller-coaster, the king-sized bull ring, and the hospitals which are never finished. The labor unions are not satisfied at all with the strikes called by the Red agitators; they do not get paid for time lost on strike. I have it of good authority that the Honduras strikers are financed at \$10,000 a day and this money is all Red.

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At the American Club recently on Armed Forces Day, I met a friend of mine, Guatemalan, who begged me to sit at his table to meet some good friends of his. It was close to the end of the party, and refreshments had been served generously and partaken of with relish. I knew him well enough to say, "You and your friends look like a bunch of conspirators huddled over here in the corner. What are you cooking up?" He said, "Don't joke, Glass; this is serious. We are really trying to build up a united front against these Commies". This was interesting because his friends were the ministers and ambassadors representing Cuba, El Salvador, Honduras, and Panama.

With reference to the prolonging absence of Colonel Diaz, I have it from a reliable source [] that the object of his visit to Central and South America was to determine the pro and anti-Communist feelings in those countries. My personal opinion, is that he might have been sowing some seeds, explaining that the Commies were not so strong as represented, that the turmoil was merely growing pains, and the sickness would clear up. I talked to two of the three Torriello brothers. I knew them intimately for four years. Armando Torriello is almost an American; he learned his dentistry in the U.S. and even practiced here. I asked him, "How come your brother Bill got that way?" He said, "Glass, I have bawled him out too, telling him he was way off base - that we can't live without the U.S., and why in the hell can't you tone down or lay off all these anti-American attacks which are losing us friends all over the world, keeping millions of tourist dollars away and playing into the hands of these Reds". And do you know what he said? 'Armando, for years this little banana republic has just been following along inconspicuously, just a little old no account country. We had to wake up Latin America and make them appreciate Guatemala. The only way to do that is to make a hell of a big stink so they can't overlook us. The more stink we make, the more publicity we will get and you must admit, that all over the world, Guatemala has reached a high peak (or words to that effect).'" The puerility of this attitude speaks for itself.

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Chief, WH III

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